

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Ipswich School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 7 & 8, 2003

Date of Report: October 15, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Program. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Student progress data

Surveys

Private school information

Local Education Application (LEA) flow through funds request information

Comprehensive plan

Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) and referral information

Promising practice

The steering committee found the district's preschool did an excellent job of identifying students through their screening process in need of special education services.

Meets requirements

All children over the age of three, residing in the district are screened. Students referred to TAT go through an extensive pre-referral process before being tested to ensure proper identification.

Children within the district that attend the private school are treated as equals with the public school children. The district, when placing students in a private facility, meets all requirements.

The district uses decisions-making procedures to analyze data to determine if the school is making progress towards the state's performance goals and indicators. This year the students made Approved Yearly Progress (AYP) in math, but not in reading.

The district has had no students drop out of school this past year. Based upon the district's comprehension plan and the fact that the district has had no suspensions or expulsions in recent years, requirements are met.

The district's staff is fully licensed. In addition the district contacts related service staff that are highly qualified with fully licensed or certified.

Needs improvement

Based on teacher surveys, the district is in need of improving personnel development. Teacher surveys indicated seventeen teachers felt they have adequate training, information, and supports to implement student IEPs and twelve teachers indicated they did not.

Validation Results**Promising practice**

The monitoring team validated the child find preschool screening announcement on the local television station as a promising practice. Through interviews, this was noted as an innovative technique for child find. In addition, an interview with administration staff indicated a positive working relationship with local medical personnel, that, with parental consent made referrals to the district, which assisted in child find activities.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for the principle of General Supervision meets requirements.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that personnel development needs to be improved. Based on the teacher surveys and interviews with teachers conducted by the monitoring team, information and supports to implement student IEPs would be helpful.

Out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.

The review team was unable to verify that services were being provided to one student listed on the district's 2002 child count. Interview also confirmed there was not an IEP in effect on December 2nd of

2002 for this student. The Department of Education will withhold from the district the Individual with Disability Act (IDEA) federal funds for the misclassified student.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Screening information

Student progress data

Referral information

Needs assessment information

Budget information

Surveys

Promising practice

The use of Accelerated Reader in the Ipswich School District has been a factor in increased scores in the area of reading comprehension. All students participate in Accelerated Reader. Students in Kindergarten through sixth grade have a twenty-minute time slot daily for independent reading time. This is a time set aside for reading and test taking activities. Children are constantly monitored for reading levels and success. Children not achieving success (unable to pass tests) work with a reading instructor on how to read for comprehension.

The accelerated reading program is encouraged in all levels K-12. The use of reading lists and books designed for the content areas encompass the high school use of Accelerated Reader. Individual staff members decide to what extent they will use accelerated reader within their program.

A reading program was begun this year in the seventh grade, which uses accelerated reader exclusively. Students have a goal of reading one book per month. Included with this is a vocabulary/dictionary and writing program used to increase the level of reading and writing skills in seventh grade. Comprehension is stressed and all students other than those in a functional skills level are included.

Meets requirements

Based upon the district's comprehension plan and the fact that the district has had no suspensions or expulsions in recent years, requirements are met. All files met standards that indicated all students were provided a free and appropriate public education.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team validated the utilization of the Accelerated Reader Program as a promising practice. Observation and interviews indicated that the program has been a positive factor to increase scores in the area of reading comprehension. The program is only available at the K-12 site in Ipswich. The monitoring team suggested that since the program has been successful at the Ipswich site, the district may

want to consider providing it at the Colony elementary sites to assist in increasing adequate yearly progress.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education meets requirements with the exception of FAPE. See information under: Out of Compliance

Out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:22:03 Certified Child

ARSD 24:05:22:04:01 Services to Children Ages 3-21

The district may include children to whom they are providing special education that are meeting the state standards. Through a student file review and interviews with district staff, the monitoring team determined there is a student on child count who is not being provided special education services in accordance with state requirements. Issues identified were: no prior notice/consent found for the child's initial evaluation in Jan-Feb 2001, no functional assessment was found to be a part of the 2001 evaluation, no documentation found to support committee determination of the disability, no parent consent for initial placement, lapses in annual review date 2-27-01 to 10-29-02, present IEP lacking information regarding present levels of performance, goal and objectives, missing IEP modification page, extended school year noted on the present IEP that they would meet to determine service on 5-15-03; district staff indicated a meeting did not take place, and no special education program is in place for the child, only related services.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Student file reviews

Teacher file reviews

Comprehensive plan

TAT information

Initial referral

Parent and teacher surveys

Number of placement committee overrides

Parental rights booklet

Meets requirements

The school district provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. Files reviewed by the district indicated

that the evaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. According to the review of student files, all students with disabilities are properly identified through the evaluation process.

The school district conducts reevaluations in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility. In a review of student files, 90 % had evaluation procedures implemented prior to dismissal from a service provided. All related services are contracted and there were files where evaluations were not conducted before dismissal. This has been corrected.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation meets requirements with the exception of reevaluation. See information under: Out of Compliance

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:05:06 Reevaluations

Reevaluation must be conducted at least every three years or if conditions warrant or the child's parent or teacher requests an evaluation. Interviews with staff indicated that they were not certain of the three-year reevaluation timeline. There was uncertainty among them as to what dates mark the beginning and ending date of the three-year reevaluation. File reviews by staff and the monitoring team supported that the timeline for reevaluation was not consistently followed for three-year reevaluations.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Complaints

Hearings

Teacher file reviews

Surveys

Comprehensive plan

Parental rights document

Consent and prior notice forms

Needs assessment information

Public awareness information

Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure

Review of access logs

Personnel training

Budget information

Meets requirements

The district policies, parental surveys, and IEPs indicate the parents are notified of their rights. As appropriate the district would appoint a surrogate parent to ensure the rights of the child are protected if no parent can be identified.

The district has policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for due process that ensure compliance. No complaints have been filed in recent years and there are policies in place.

Needs improvement

In review of student files, it was determined that the school district receives verbal consent, but in only 25% of initial placement files reviewed was the consent signed on the last page of the IEP. Parents signed the front page of their child's IEP. This was an oversight when we changed from employing a district speech therapist to contracting with the hospital. This has since been corrected.

The district/agency needs to improve on annually providing the FERPA notice to all parents.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards, meets requirements.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team addresses consent for initial placement and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) under; Out of Compliance

Out of compliance**ARSD 24:05:30:17 Consent**

Informed parental consent must be obtained before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services. The district review of student files indicated consent for initial placement was not obtained in 25% of the files reviewed. File reviews and interviews with staff conducted by monitoring team indicated consent was not consistently obtained when a child qualified for only speech/language services. Interviews with the speech therapist and special education director indicated they were recently made aware of this oversight and requirement; however, documentation was not available to support the correction.

ARSD 24:05:29:03 Annual Notice of Rights, FERPA Regulation 99.6

A copy of the district's annual notice to parents regarding rights to inspect and review education records under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was not disseminated to all parents this past year. Interviews with administration indicated that they were not aware that this information must be disseminated to all parents annually.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Comprehensive plan

Surveys

File reviews

Meets requirements

The district ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. All prior notices were in place in the files that were reviewed. Student files reviewed by the district supports that the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership. The district uses the IEP form recommended by the state to ensure the document contains all required content. All policies and procedures for proper IEPs are in effect. Student files reviewed by the district staff had appropriate IEPs in place.

Out of compliance

File reviews by staff determined that the district is missing the time line on annual reviews. Five files (17%) were found to have missed the time line regarding annual review and one file was late with the evaluation results. Timelines were within one or two days. The school district feels that it is of utmost importance that parents be at their child's IEP meeting therefore, the meeting dates are parent driven. A system is in place to prevent missing IEP meeting dates with the exception of when a parent is unable to attend on the specific date.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were missing parts on the present levels of performance page in 10% of the files reviewed by the district. In 27% of the files reviewed by the district for transition aged students, the Present Level of Performance was not linked to the area of transition. Eight percent of the parents surveyed indicated they were not regularly informed of their child's progress.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program meets requirements except in the area of appropriate IEP membership and IEP content. See information under: Out of Compliance

Files reviewed by the monitoring team and interviews indicated that IEPs for student who are transition age and have recently been developed link the area(s) of transition to the student's present level of performance.

Files reviewed by the monitoring team and interviews indicated progress reports are sent to parents regularly to inform them of their child's progress.

Needs improvement

The district must initiate and conduct IEP team meetings to periodically review each student's individual educational program and if appropriate, revise its provisions. The district steering committee noted this area as a concern due to 17% of the file reviewed not meeting the annual review date. In four of eighteen student files, the monitoring team found documentation that indicated a yearly review did not take place within the one-year timeline. Interviews indicated that a system is in place to prevent missing IEP meeting dates with the exception of when a parent is unable to attend on the specific date. Although the monitoring team agreed this is an area that needs to be improved, it was not noted as a systemic problem.

In student IEPs, the present level of performance needs to be linked to evaluation data and include a statement as to how the student's disability impacts their progress in the general curriculum and include parent input. In 10% of the files reviewed by the district staff, it was not clarified as to how the student's disability effects their involvement and progress in the general curriculum. The IEP also needs to have annual goals or short-term objectives that include the following elements: conditions, performance and criteria. Files reviewed by the monitoring team indicated that present level of performances, goals and objectives written by related service staff that did not consistently address the required content. The monitoring team did find the required content in more recently written IEPs. An interview with related service staff indicated they have recently made changes to address all required areas. The monitoring team agrees this is an area that needs improvement to assure all related service providers are writing appropriate present level of performances, annual goals and objectives.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:24:04.03.Determination of Eligibility

Upon completing the administration of tests and other evaluation materials, the individual education program (IEP) team is to determine whether the student is a student with a disability and provide a copy of that determination to the parent. No documentation was found nor were appropriate signatures documented in student files to support the determination of a disabling condition except for students with a specific learning disability (SLD). Interviews with special education teachers indicated that they were recently made aware of this requirement, however; the district had not implemented procedures on how this would occur for all students in need of special education or special education and related services.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.01 IEP Team.

The IEP team for each student with a disability must include appropriate members at the IEP meetings. In the files reviewed by the monitoring team, 4 out of 6 did not include a regular education teacher in the meeting. All six files were for students identified with a speech/language disability.

ARSD: 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program.

ARSD 24:05:28:02 Continuum of alternative Placements

The IEP must address the special education and related services to be provided, the amount and location of services. The IEP must also address the justification for placement. This statement must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the general classroom and in extracurricular and non-academic activities. In the speech/language files reviewed by the monitoring team, the IEP did not state the location of services nor did the student's justification statement on the IEP address the required content. For example, "General classroom with modification accepted by the team as least restrictive environment to make progress".

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

File reviews

Comprehensive plan

IEPs

Surveys

Promising practice

The steering committee would recommend the Ipswich School District Preschool fill a promising practice in both LRE and Child Find. Screening procedures ensure identification of children in need of special education services. The preschool itself is adapted for all children with or without special needs. The staff collaborates to ensure all students are educated in a like manner and that all students start school ready to learn.

Meets requirements

File review shows that care is taken to ensure that all children receiving services are in the least restrictive environment with the supports that they might need to successful participation.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The district has developed a preschool program for preschool-aged students throughout the district. It is open to any family residing in the district that has a child, ages 3-5. Funding from Title 1 and school district general funds supports the preschool program. The monitoring team observed this program and interviewed district staff that reported the program to be an effective tool in providing appropriate developmental opportunities, as well as a tool for remediating potential areas of concern and early identification of students with special needs.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment, meets requirements.